



Philippe Raphanel with one of his mine shafts at Diane Farris Gallery.

Raphanel

seduced

by West

Coast

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By ART PERRY
Art Critic

The new paintings by Philippe Raphanel are as big and raw as the freshly cut tree stumps and logs he loves to paint.

But this young Parisian who visited Hornby Island 10 years ago is often seduced into delirium by the force of the western landscape.

Hornby Island was Raphanel's first view of Canada. The ruggedness of our sea and forests have subsequently tossed him into varying series of expressionist paintings that run wild with pantheistic enthusiasm but often lack any real control. It is as if the landscape has mesmerized Raphanel into a half-crazed, wood nymph, drunk-happy state as he confronts the depths of the wild west.

This is not to say that Raphanel is totally without control, but in his new work at the Diane Farris Gallery his painterly energy and images of dramatic mine shafts (first visited in the Slocan Valley) are often trivialized by unnecessary elements added to the force of his work — a shovel or an overturned mining cart, for instance.

There is a force and energy in Raphanel's art but, unlike the one-way tunnels, the direction of this force is less obvious. Enthusiasm is a means to painting, not

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The colors are brash, the forms are jagged and bevelled into heavy troughs of paint. But in the end, is all this bravado, all this enlarged scale, necessary? Perhaps a little more thought and a little less action might solidify his art.

One looks for examples with which to compare Raphanel's work, other artists who have the same obvious love of the western landscape yet who have resolved their frantic love into paintings that transcend the paint and gesture and reach a deeper centre in their art. Perhaps Emily Carr is the best example, or, closer to home for Raphanel, Jack Shadbolt's charcoal drawings of Hornby Island.

There appears to be too much happening in his art for no apparent reason. The paintings have all the elements to become some of the most important statements on our West Coast landscape, yet Raphanel misses the mark by being too eager and too stylistic. A stronger inner truth from the artist himself needs to come through. These works have an amazing potential if only it were realized.

The show continues until Sat-